

Bob Schwerdt on quality: I'd like to buy an A!

When some damaged stamps, i.e. perfin, sell for \$25 to \$75 each, can they really be considered damaged?

Some purists consider perfins of lesser ilk than mint stamps with gum skips or used stamps with nibbled perforations. But consider this: a perfin gives a stamp an added pedigree. This pedigree usually confirms who used the stamp (and with catalog assistance) where the company (user) was located, and during which period the stamp was used. Such "damage" makes the stamp more specific than hundreds or thousands of other similar to it.

More than 20 years ago some dealers were pricing perfins slightly higher than the same stamps without perfins. The dealers recognized that a perfin added significance to a common stamp and charged accordingly.

Of course, most dealers are looking at the stamp, not the perfin, and charge high prices for U.S. high catalog issues with or without perfins. Common perfins are plentiful on the dollar values of the 1923 U.S. definitives. Forty years ago these would normally sell for 10% of catalog. Today that is no longer true. The "damage" condition is no longer a factor in pricing perfins.

Perfins, however, can be damaged regardless of the condition of the stamp. Missing holes, dumb punches, split de-

signs, and designs running into edge perforations all contribute to downgrading the perfin value. To me, any perfin with a single hole missing is a space-filler. (I realize that a few U.S. patterns have never been found complete because a pin was damaged during first usage.)

Most collections include a multitude of space-fillers. This is especially true of many foreign collections. I can attest to this after handling the resale of several large collections. We collect space-fillers temporarily, hoping a perfect pattern will eventually cross our desks. Upgrading our collections is a useful process when checking a perfin accumulation.

I would hesitate to change a perfin rating from A (perfect) to C (three holes missing). An A-rate is an A-rate, BUT a damaged A-rate should sell for considerably less than a perfect A-rate. When I have duplicates, I sell perfect A-rates for \$10 and space-filler A-rates for \$1. It would be too time consuming to work out a scale for damaged perfins according to the number of missing holes. And who would agree anyway?

A damaged perfin is a damaged perfin is a damaged perfin and rarely ever more than a space-filler!